

[Dave and Jeanette Bevely]

[W5994?] Life Save and [?] - History - Jeanette Bevely, Diggs

Federal Writers' Project

Paul Diggs

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Bevely, Dave and Jeanette

34 Lake Wire Drive

Lakeland, Florida

DAVE AND JEANETTE BEVELY, WATCHMAN A C L RAILROAD.

Dave was stopping traffic at the busy intersection of Iowa Avenue and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. There, he stood with the round galvanized sign with a handle, and the word "stop" printed on both sides. He was holding it above his head to warn the on coming drivers in the automobiles that a train was approaching. The grinding of brakes on the mighty steel wheels could be heard as the Limited came pounding down the track enroute to Tampa, Florida. Dave said, "you better step back, this train makes a plenty of dust when it pauses." All of a sudden it passed, and the dust flew like a whirlwind. He then waved for the traffic to move on. In a few minutes the Avenue was cleared of the heavy traffic until time for the next train to pass.

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In his courteous way he waved for cars to go and come, seeing to their safety in passing the grade crossing. After completing his duty, Dave invited me to his little shed that sits beside the main line. There he rested himself on two rocks placed on top of one another. On the other side of the door was a nail keg with a burlap sack on it for a pillow. The shed was four feet in dimension, with a small stove sitting in the north-west corner, and a water cooler sitting on a stand in the other corner. There was a delapidated chair covered also with a burlap sack. Three lantern were on a shelf on the west side, these he used at night to stop traffic. On the out side was a pile of wood, cut and ready to burn in case he needed a fire. He had prepared it for his shift, which was from three oclock P.M. to eleven oclock P.M. Dave said, "four passenger 2 trains, and six freight trains passes while I am on duty."

Dave lives in a section house at 34 Lake Wire Drive with his family consisting his wife Jeanette, age 41, three step children Mildred, age 19, who takes in washing at home; Minnie Lee, age [?], who does the same; and Junior, age 13. The step-children away from home are Lee Early, age 25- married and lives in Trilby, Fla. Theodore, age [?], married and has two children. Theodore lives next door to Dave in house number thirty two.

Dave stated that he was born in Jefferson County, Florida. December 5th, 1886. His father was Fred , and mother Francis Bevely. He said, "that he has heard his father say he was five years old when freedom was declared. There were fourteen children in the family- seven boys and seven girls. The surviving five live in various section of the State. His father married Julia Fern, after the death of his mother. "My parents were farmers in Jefferson County. I ran away from home when I was between twelve and thirteen years old. I strayed away on account of the treatment I received from my stepmother. Lots of boys stray away from home on that account. "When I became a man I returned home, and there I married to my first wife Rosetta Turner, at [monticella?], in Jefferson County, 1908. We separated in later years. I then married my second wide Jeanette Hallman, in 1932, Lakeland, Florida. We have no children."

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"During my first marriage in 1908 I settled in Alachua County. I worked on the section gang, on a tramroad. They used wood burners engines. I received 1.50 per day. I came to Folk County, where I began working at the Pebbledale Phosphate mine. I averaged on this job around seven dollars a week. We lived in the quarters built for the workers. After working there for three years I returned to Jefferson County, and worked on the farm with my father. Later I went to Morehaven, in Glades County. There I worked on the extra gang of the Atlantic Coast Line putting down railroad rails. Part of the time I cooked for the workers in the gang. Afterwards I quit the extra gang and went to work on the section gang with headquarters in Lake Wales, Florida. Here I worked from January to November in 1925. During this year I left and moved to Lakeland, Florida. Where I have been ever since during the same kind of work on the section gang. Most of my work has been in the yard here in Lakeland. This job that I am holding down now, was given to me when the old man [was?] retired who use to be watchman here. When on the section gang I received 1.60 a day. Now I make 50.00 a month. I have been at this work little over a year. There has not been an accident on this crossing since I took it over."

"I have to attend Safty Meetings held at different places. To be safe yourself you have to learn to make others safe. All of my luck comes from a good work record. I always wanted to work well from a kid up."

"My brother Jim, is a watchman at the other crossing on Florida Avenue. We started in service together, he is forty seven years old. I have another brother Bee who lives on the farm in Jefferson County."

"I have a good boss-man, our foreman Mr.R.W. Sweat - who heads up the Railroad Department."

"I never went to school a day in my life. When I left home I could neither read nor write my name. Now I can read and write anything. How I began, I would buy paper and envelopes, and had a friend who would do the writting for me. I wouldn't get any answer for them and

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when I got wise I found that he was 4 signing his name to them. I noticed he would get lots of mail and could tell me things about home. From then on I began to learn to read and write.”

“Yes to my judgement I think a man should have an education. I read a good deal on this job. You see what I read.” Dave arose from his stone seat and entered his shed, and brought out a few [small?] books. They were as following: The Bible, The Child's Bible Question Book, The Pocket Treasury, The Emphazized Gospal of St John, and the Words of Comfort and Consolation.

“I don't have time to fool with little old joke books. I tries to read something that will give me consolation to my soul.”

In regard to voting Dave said, “no sir; I never voted, never been interested in voting. Ever since I first heard of colored people having trouble voting I never fooled with it.

“Yes Sir, I am a member of the Primitive Baptist Church, located on West [?] Street. Our pastor is Rev. C.B. Bartley,he pastors our church and one in St. Petersburg, Florida. We hold service twice a month. I have been a churchman since 1905. I used to be president of the Usher Board,Usher, and a trustee. I had to give up my church work on account of my job. My family they attend church regularly. A person could'nt live a better life under [the?] Sun than a christian life. It's the finest life to live on earth. This new fashion religion that they have now of days, I don't have no faith in it. This old fashion religion will hold fast. It will stay with you.”

“This new religion people will go out and get drunk,cuss, and fight, and go to church [?] [?] you praying. When I was small I would go to church, and at that time I was considered develish. I remember when I would chunk stones at the chicken. My mother would take me to the field where they were picking cotton. I was 5 so small, they had a six pound

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sack , and had to pick cotton too. In making me work that kept me ut of mischief. I think that started me off to work and being good.”

Dave is five feet and four inches in height, dark brown in complexion, he was dressed in overalls with a heavy gold chain hanging with an expensive watch on it. He displayed his watch and stated that it kept correct time. He stated that he has to have it checked every week by the jeweler. His old felt hat was black. And his gold teeth in front shined when he smiled. He has a pleasant personality, and good common sense about conditions in general. Every on is passing appeared to know him. They did not fail to speak to Dave.

Dave said, “that he did not have to pay any rent for his home. the company supplies the house.” The home on Lake Wire is painted gray with white trimmings like all the other section houses that line Lake Wire next to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. His wife was very pleasant and from observation she is a good housekeeper. They have two bed rooms, and the furniture was in very good shape. This day they were very neat in thier attire.

They stated that their grocery bill was never over 20.00 per month, and they have everything they want. Dave said, “that he did not eat very much meat, some times a little bacon, mostly I like vegetables and no sweets.”

There are about five more Colored families in this section, they are surrounded by white people. The exterior appearence was good. The lawn was green and well kept. There was a fence in front of the house and it was painted white. They all seemed to be happy together.

Dave said, “when I get off from work I go home and sleep, 6 when I wake up I chop wood, and work around the lawn. I hardly have time to do anything else. I don't play any kind of games, I am too old for that now. I have to take care of myself so I can make [a?] living for my family. During these times there is no time for a fellow to fool around.”

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At this time Dave said well I must get on the job, it is time for a train to come through, and with a courteous bow he said good bye.